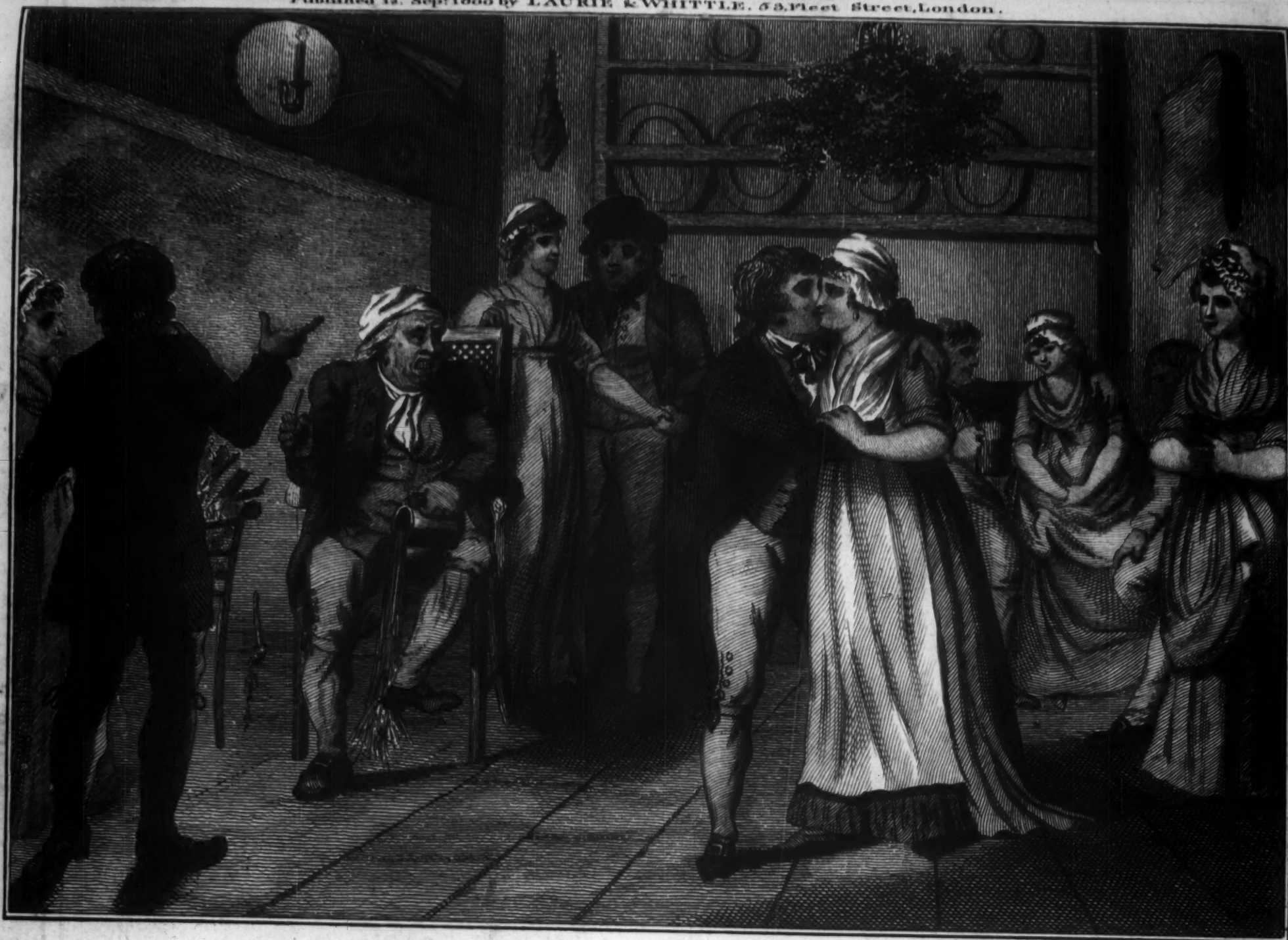




THE MISTLETOE.—A CHRISTMAS TALE.

BY LAURA MARIA.

A FARMER'S WIFE, both young and gay,
And fresh as op'ning morn of May!
Had taken to herself a Spouse,
And taken many solemn vows,
That *she*, a faithful mate would prove,
In meekness, duty, and in love;
That *she*, despising joy and wealth,
Would be, in sickness and in health,
His only comfort, and his friend—
But mark the *sequel*, and attend.

This FARMER, as the story's told,
Was somewhat cross, and somewhat old;
His was the *wint'ry* hour of life,
While *Summer* smil'd before his *Wife*;
He was both splenetic and crusty,
She, buxom, blooming, blithe, and lusty;
A contrast, rather form'd to cloy
The zest of matrimonial joy!

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'Twas CHRISTMAS TIME, the PEASANT
Assembled gay, with dance and song,
The *Farmer's* kitchen long had been
Of annual sports the busy scene;
The wood fire blaz'd, the chimney wide,
Presented seats on either side;
Long rows of wooden *trenchers*, clean,
Bedeck'd with *holly-boughs*, were seen;
The shining tankard's foamy ale
Gave *spirits* to the *goblin* tale,
While many a rosy cheek grew pale.

It happen'd that, some sport to shew,
The ceiling held—a MISTLETOE:
A magic bough, and well design'd
To prove the coyest maiden *kind*:
A magic bough, which DRUIDS old
In sacred mysteries enroll'd;
And which, or gossip FAME's a liar,
Still warms the soul with vivid fire,

Still promises celestial bliss,—
While *bigots* snatch their *idols* kisses.
The MISTLETOE was doom'd to be
The talisman of destiny!
Beneath its ample boughs, we're told,
Full many a timid swain grew bold;
Full many a roguish eye askance,
Beheld it with impatient glance;
And many a ruddy cheek confess'd
The triumphs of the beating breast;
And many a rustic rover sigh'd,
Who ask'd the kiss—and was *denied*.

First MARG'RY smil'd, and gave her lover
A kiss—then thank'd her stars, 'twas over!
Next KATE, with a reluctant pace,
Was led towards the mystic place;
Then SUE, a merry laughing jade,
A dimpled, yielding blush, display'd;
While JOAN, her CHASTITY to shew,
Wish'd the "*bold knaves* wou'd serve her so!
SHE'D TEACH the *rogues* such wanton play,"
And well she *could*, *she* knew the way!

The FARMER, mute with jealous care,
Sat sullen in his wicker chair;
Hating the noisy gamester's host,
Yet fearful to resign his post;
He envied all their sportive strife,
But most he watch'd his blooming *wife*;
And trembled, lest her steps should go,
Incautious, near THE MISTLETOE.

Now HODGE, a youth of rustic grace,
Of form athletic, manly face,
On MISTRESS HOMESPUN turn'd his eye,
And breath'd a soul-declaring sigh;
Old HOMESPUN mark'd his lift'ning fair,
And nestled in his wicker chair;
HODGE swore she might his heart command,
The PIPE was dropp'd from HOMESPUN's hand!

HODGE prest her slender waist around,
The FARMER check'd his draught, and frown'd;
And now beneath the MISTLETOE
'Twas MISTRESS HOMESPUN's turn to go,
Old SURLY shook his wicker chair—
And sternly utter'd,—"*Let her dare!*"

HODGE to the FARMER's wife declar'd
Such *husbands* never should be spar'd;
Swore, they deserv'd the *worst* disgrace,
That lights upon the wedded race,
And vow'd, that night, he would not go,
Unblest, beneath the MISTLETOE.
The merry group all recommend
A harmless *kiss*, the strife to end:
"*Why not?*" says MARG'RY, "who would fear
"A dang'rous moment *once a year?*"
SUSAN observ'd, that "*ancient* folks
"Were seldom pleas'd by *youthful* jokes."
But KATE, who, till that fatal hour,
Had held o'er HODGE unrivall'd pow'r,
With curving lip, and head aside,
Look'd down, and smil'd in conscious pride,
Then, anxious to conceal her care,
She humm'd—WHAT FOOLS SOME WOMEN ARE!

Now MISTRESS HOMESPUN, sorely vex'd,
By pride and jealous rage perplex'd;
And angry, that her peevish spouse
Should doubt her matrimonial vows;
But, *most of all*, resolv'd to make,
An envious RIVAL's bosom ache,
Commanded HODGE to let her go,
Nor lead her near the MISTLETOE,
"Why should you ask it o'er and o'er?"
Cried she, "*we've been there TWICE BEFORE!*"

'Tis thus, to check a RIVAL's sway,
That WOMEN oft THEMSELVES betray!
While, VANITY alone pursuing,
They rashly prove THEIR OWN UNDOING!

LAURA MARIA.